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DRL/IRF FOR COFSKY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2029
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL KIRF EG
SUBJECT: EGYPT ISSUES DOCUMENTS TO BAHĀ'IS

REF: A. CAIRO 688
 1B. 08 CAIRO 157

Classified By: Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
Catherine Hill-Herndon for reason 1.4 (d).

11. Key Points

-- (SBU) On May 20, the GoE issued birth certificates, containing dashes in the religion field, to two of the three Baha'is who sued the GoE seeking such documents. (ref B)

-- (SBU) The third plaintiff, who is seeking a national identification card, has not yet received the document, despite favorable court rulings.

-- (SBU) Approximately twenty Baha'is - none involved in the litigation - applied for national identification cards after Egypt's Ministry of Interior (MoI) issued a decree on April 14 establishing procedures for members of "unrecognized" religions to receive identity documents. (ref A) The MoI has not yet acted on their applications.

12. (C) Comment: This is the first tangible action the GoE has taken to alleviate the hardship it created through its refusal to recognize religions other than Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and the 2005 introduction of computerized identity documents. While this is a small step, the Baha'i community is hopeful that the issuance of the two birth certificates signals the GoE's commitment to finally addressing the issue. We will press the GoE for further action.

The MoI Finally Acts

13. (C) According to Rauf Hindy, father of two of the three Baha'is involved in the identification document litigation, on May 20, Egypt's Ministry of Interior (MoI) issued birth certificates - containing a dash in the religious identification field - to his children, the remedy they had sought. Within hours of the issuance of the certificates, local internet news sites posted pictures of the documents, clearly showing the dash in the religious identification field. The third plaintiff in the case, who sought the issuance of a national identification card with a dash in the religious identification field, has not yet received the document.

14. (SBU) Local Baha'is told us that since the issuance of an MoI decree on April 14, approximately twenty Baha'is have applied for identification cards. None have received the requested documents.

SCOBAY